



STONES OF REMEMBRANCE  
THE HISTORIC JEWISH CEMETERY  
in  
LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO





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Photos by Cary Herz  
Foreword by Rabbi Leonard A. Helman  
Introduction by Stanley M. Hordes

NEW MEXICO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## FOREWORD

Through the ages, Jewish history has been preserved not only on the written page, but also on the carved stones of Jewish cemeteries. Over the centuries, the first act that Jews performed after moving into a new area was to establish and dedicate a cemetery. To honor and care for the dead was considered the greatest of all Mitzvot—positive acts following God's commandments.

In 1881, pioneering Jews of Las Vegas, New Mexico, founded a small cemetery at the far outskirts of the town. Today, over a century later, the Montefiore Cemetery is incorporated into the town along with cemeteries of organizations such as the Masons. The names and histories of the men, women and children of Las Vegas Jewry are found on the stones in this graveyard. Unfortunately, vandalism has

destroyed much of that great historic site. Jews today are attempting to preserve the cemetery and to prevent further vandalism.

This booklet is about the Montefiore Cemetery, established by New Mexico's first Jewish congregation, and the efforts of past and present generations of Jews and non-Jews to maintain our precious connection with Jewish history.

Thank you for reading this work and seeing the pictures of a proud chapter in New Mexico Jewish history.

*Rabbi Leonard A. Helman*  
Congregation Beth Shalom  
Santa Fe, New Mexico





## INTRODUCTION

Scores of headstones stand in the Montefiore Cemetery in the largely Hispanic town of Las Vegas, New Mexico, bearing inscriptions in German and Hebrew, weathered by harsh winds and battered by senseless vandalism.

To most people, this scene appears most unlikely and far removed from the contexts usually associated with Jewish life in the United States. But, fortunately, these headstones reveal much about the multicultural history of New Mexico since the European colonization began in the late 1500s. These markers offer mute testimony to the long and complex history of Jewish pioneers in New Mexico.

In the mid-1800s, on the heels of the conquering United States Army, a wave of Jewish settlers arrived, mainly Ashkenazi merchants and traders from Germany and Eastern Europe. Initially, most of these Jews were attracted to Santa Fe, but when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad bypassed the capital, many gravitated to the new commercial centers of Albuquerque and Las Vegas. Others chose to disperse among the small Hispanic villages and Indian Pueblos, making their livelihoods as traveling merchants, ranchers or farmers.

The first synagogue in New Mexico, Congregation Montefiore, was built in Las Vegas in 1881, and it was soon followed by the development of such volunteer groups and fraternal organizations and the Rosenwald Chapter of B'nai B'rith, Jewish Ladies Cemetery Fund and Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society. Today, names such as Taichert, Ilfeld, Rosenwald, Terr, Regensberg, Teitelbaum, Rosenthal, Stern, Jaffa, Hoffman and Vorenberg fill the records and grave stones that document the early settlement of the thriving Las Vegas Jewish community of the early twentieth century.

By the 1920s, the principal east-west route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad had bypassed Las Vegas, causing the town to suffer a pronounced commercial decline. Many of the Jews of Las Vegas chose to leave town in favor of greater economic opportunities elsewhere. Today, few Jews remain in Las Vegas to carry on the traditions of their ancestors. Along with the fading paint on the buildings where Jewish merchants conducted their commercial business, the cemetery serves as a stark memorial to those who preceded us and established the first formal Jewish community in New Mexico.

*Stanley M. Hordes*

Vice-President

New Mexico Jewish Historical Society

March 30, 1989



לד שבעים חמש  
ועים

שמעון בן שמעון של בן ד

פודנער סלד יאנואר 1921

דער דער שטאט פאר

ל א ב

און און און און

HOMER LOUIS,

SON OF S. & D. BURGER

Born Jan. 19, 1891,

Died June 11, 1891.

## THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S STATEMENT

When I first approached the Montefiore Cemetery, I did so as a photojournalist: I wanted to document its existence on film. However, as I made subsequent visits, the cemetery took on a new importance for me. I began not only to record, but to explore and explain through the medium of photography. The textures and shapes of the grave markers, the forms and patterns of carefully etched stone, began to represent both an artistic and a historical continuum.

I am fascinated by the bravery of the first people who came here. They came with little or nothing and built their lives and their community. I get lost out there with them; there is no movement except the birds and the sun and the photographer. I sometimes have a sense of urgency, despite the stillness. This is caused in part by my response to the stories the cemetery tells. I would like the cemetery to be around for another one hundred years so those seeking it out, like me, can bear witness to those stories.

*Cary Herz*



*Montefiore Cemetery was established in 1888, comprising the northwest corner of the Masonic Cemetery. Overlooking Las Vegas and the Gallinas River Valley, it serves as the final resting place for some 160 Jewish pioneers who settled in the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.*





*Despite the diligent efforts of the few remaining descendants, vandalism and neglect have taken their toll on the cemetery.*







*In 1986, the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society initiated an annual clean-up of the cemetery, attempting to restore the site to its former dignity.*



JOSEPH COLMAN

BORN  
AT HOOE  
GERMANY  
DIED AT  
LAS VEGAS

JULY 6  
1895  
AGED  
54 YEARS





*Many of the monuments reflect the artistic grandeur of an earlier day.*

הבית  
מִיכָאֵל אֶלְטֶר  
בֶּר אֱלִיהוּ בִיעֹרְמָן  
תִּנִּצִּב'ה'

WALTER BIERMAN  
Aug. 15  
1878

June 8  
1910





*The Charles Ilfeld Memorial Chapel, which graced the entrance of the cemetery since its construction in 1912, once was regarded as the finest example of Queen Anne architecture in the region. In December of 1988 arsonists set fire to the structure, leaving behind only a shell of its original magnificence.*







*Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,  
No Psalms of David now the silence break,  
No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue  
in the grand dialect the Prophets spake.*

*Gone are the living, but the dead remain,  
And not neglected; for a hand unseen,  
Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain,  
Still keeps their graves and their resemblance green.*

from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,  
The Jewish Cemetery at Newport, 1852-54.



## IN MEMORIAM

Milton Taichert  
1892-1989

Whose vital contributions to the Jewish community of Las Vegas and New Mexico will never be forgotten by the generations who followed.







# Montefiore Cemetery

First on site inventory of monuments made in fall 1988 by Joanie Berde and Lewis Terr. Second on site inventory made spring 1990 by Sherry Lester and Jeffrey Horton.

## ROW 1 Block C: (westmost, highest on the hill.)

Lea Kohn 1840-1910  
H. Adams 1824-1900  
David Goldstien 1877-1897  
Jacob Heineman 1844-1898  
John H. Teitlbaum 1843-1908 (9)  
(Map indicates a wooden monument south of Goldstien grave site.)

## ROW 2 Block B:

Patsy Bernice Bacharach 1904-1908  
(Large plot may have more graves.)

## Block C:

Nathan Adler d. 1899 (Map indicates M&C Adler)  
Julius Stern 1890-1891  
Julius Price 1836-1888

## Block C North:

Boyd Travis (Goodman) Jr. 1923-1941

## ROW 3 Block A:

Jennie Levy 1869-1916  
Henry Levy 1860-1909

## Block B:

Joseph Werrheim Jr. 1915-1916  
Julia Stern 1865-1943  
Jacob Stern 1861-1927  
Sydney Stern 1897-1901

## Block C:

Simon Polskee 1870-1899  
Homer Luis Burger 1891-1891  
Cecelia Adams 1886k-1889  
Adolf Danziger 1840-1889  
Violet Danziger 1874-1895  
Barette Danziger 1848-1919  
George Erstling 1844-1890  
Charles Fellner 1870-1903  
Harry Goldsmith 1871-1953

## ROW 4 Block D:

Walter Bierman 1878-1910  
(Map indicates grave of I. Davis, south of Bierman.)

## Block E:

Jacob Levy 1885-1905  
Caroline Levy 1849-1902  
Harris Levy d. 1905  
Clara Stern 1879-1912  
Fannie Stern 1853-1925  
Isidor Stern 1840-1898

## Block F:

Samuel Nahn 1860-1890  
Aaron Schloss 1841-1894  
Albert Newman 1874-1900  
Levi Hertzstein 1874-1896  
Rosa Goldsmith 1848-1937  
Abe. Goldsmith 1826-1892  
(Levy) Son of Hertzstein 1902-1905  
Morris Hertzstein 1870-1928  
Lena Hertzstein 1905-1952  
Emma Canter 1863-1939  
Betty Gunst 1865-1948

## Block G:

Fromma Goldsmith 1871-1906  
H. A. Canter 1862-1916  
Nathan A. Goldsmith 1869-1907

## ROW 5 Block D:

Joseph W. Graaf 1878-1951  
Jacob Graaf 1875-1941  
Pauline Graaf 1843-1912  
Julius Graaf 1841-1912  
Alfred Weil 1850-1900

## Block E:

Hannah Kauffman 1900-1900  
Carrie Kauffman 1867-?  
Sol Kauffmann 1853-1928  
Aaron Schutz 1852-1916

## ROW 5 Block F:

Fannie Aber 1858-1935  
Saul Rosenthal 1860-1938  
Napelius L. Rosenthal 1830-1896  
Mother Hulda Rosenthal no date  
Pauline Weil 1900-1909  
Mother Weil 1861-1925  
Nathan Weil 1867-1946  
Clarence Bowman 1882-1942

## Block G:

(Miscellaneous grave sites; metal markers down.)  
Alex Rosenthal 1853-1943  
(Map indicates S. Levine most north, no marker.)

## ROW 6 Block H:

Benjamin Brash 1842-1910  
Theresa Brash 1853-1925  
Ted Brash d. 1940  
Louise Brash d. 1957  
Joseph Morse 1872-1902  
Bertha Morse 1873-1943



**Block I:**

Emma Friedman 1863-1916  
 Moses Friedman 1824-1899  
 Hyman Friedman 1857-1912  
 Redel Friedman no date

**Block J:**

J. N. Straus 1811-1896  
 Adolph Straus 1848-1923  
 Joseph Colman 1841-1895  
 Carolina Reuther 1840-1903  
 Simon Reuther d. 1922  
 Joseph Kohn 1871-1945  
 Adolphine S. Kohn 1871-1949  
 Bertha Kohn d. 1924  
 Chas. C. Kohn 1861-1913

**ROW 7 Block H:**

Myron Landis 1883-1952  
 Wolf Morants 1888-1892  
 Hattie M. Morants 1885-1940  
 Clara Heineman 1888-1942  
 Elise Heineman d. 1918

**Block I:**

Marie Kohn no date

**Block J:**

Carl Harberg 1861-1924  
 Julia Klein Harberg 1856-1954  
 Janete C. Hoffman 1886-1941  
 Adele D. Hoffman 1915-1922  
 Simon Hoffman 1882-1940  
 Joseph M. Nahm 1901-1986  
 Helen Nahm Kessell 1894-1941  
 Miriam Nahm 1906-1984  
 Ruth Nahm 1896-1963  
 Ella Nahm 1873-1951  
 Sigmund Nahm 1863-1932  
 Julius Appel 1873-1924

**ROW 8 Block K:**

Milton Taichert 1892-1989  
 Francis E. Taichert 1902-1978  
 Marlene P. Taichert 1931-1932  
 Henry A. Levey 1849-1932

**Block L:**

Joseph Lloyd Bible 1903-1982  
 Sara S. Bible 1908-1969  
 Louis Stern 1861-1930  
 Hanna Stern 1868-1957  
 Isaac Terr M.D. 1910-1986  
 Pearl Terr 1877-1973

**Block M:**

Violet Hoffman Wertz 1903-1986  
 Maurice Hoffman 1906-1973  
 Julia D. Hoffman 1878-1947  
 Nestor Hoffman 1871-1945  
 Harry E. Kohn 1878-1947

**ROW 9 Block K:**

Joseph A. Taichert 1882-1955  
 Annie S. Taichert 1896-1978  
 Sigmund S. Moise 1877-1941  
**Block L:** Joseph Danziger 1880-1943  
 Julia J. Danziger 1892-1973  
 Eleanor J. Jaffa 1894-1970  
 Arthur G. Jaffa 1883-1952  
 Ester Strauss Jaffa 1869-1929  
 Nathan Jaffa 1863-1945

**Block M:**

Simon Vorenberg 1860-1926  
 Theresa H. Vorenberg 1863-1952  
 Saul Vorenberg 1898-1932  
 Harry Vorenberg 1900-1956

**ROW 10 Block K:**

Jay Stern 1893-1971

**Block L:**

Doris L. Regensberg 1929-1933  
 Maurice Regensberg 1884-1930  
 Morris Geenberger 1864-1929

**Block M:**

Florence M. Ilfeld 1909-1927  
 Minnie S. Ilfeld 1878-1940  
 Ludwig Wm. Ilfeld 1874-1960  
 Steinfeldt stone, no names, Phillip ? Minnie?  
 Bertha Katz 1870-1940

**ROW 11**

Henry Katz 1905-1941  
 Morris Katz 1888-1958  
 Marguerite W. Katz 1892-1977  
 M. P. Waxman  
 R. R. Waxman

**ROW 11 Block O:**

Carl Regensberg d. 1942  
 Richard Charles Ilfeld 1933-1943  
 Carl Wm. Ilfeld 1902-1975  
 Max Ludwig Ilfeld 1900-1984

**ROW 12 Block S:**

Carl Reinhardt 1879-1911  
 Miss Alice Hunt 1855-1912  
 Wm. Edward Wood 1879-1912  
 Bedford H. Correll 1888-1913

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